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Managerial training and development in telecommunication organizations in Palestine

Managerial
training and
development

685

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the nature and extent of management development and training in Palestinian telecommunication organizations using a basic trichotomous (three-stage) model: needs assessment, training development, and evaluation.

Design/methodology/approach – A survey questionnaires supported by semi-structured interviews was conducted to capture and corroborate the issues raised by middle and senior managers. Subsequently, the valid data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and was tabulated for the purpose of interpretation and comparison with the findings available from literature.

Findings – Despite the systematic approach to training and development, the findings revealed inadequacy deriving from heavy emphasis on conventional methods throughout the three stages particularly the formal in-house training; the current system does not offer a holistic approach to meet the challenging needs for management development.

Research limitations/implications – The study adopts an exploratory in depth empirical investigation in Palestinian telecommunication organizations, it provides insight into management training and development in the private sector in Palestine. It has profound theoretical and practical implications for the increased effectiveness of management in the region and beyond.

Practical implications – The use of trichotomous approach explores the entire process, rather than implementation alone, thus the findings will have practical implications for the researcher and practitioners to design, implement, and systematically appraise the effectiveness of training development initiatives.

Originality/value – This paper offers both professionals and academics a fresh perspective on training and development in Palestinian telecommunication organizations; it highlights the importance of such activity, and stresses on the need for the design of programmes that can adequately incorporate the individual and corporate needs for development.

Keywords Human resource management, Management development, Training management

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Driven by concerns over organizational competitive position in both local and international markets, the role of management development and training has progressively been recognized as a critical element of an organization's strategy, and in boosting efficiency and productivity (Analoui and Khoury, 2010; Analoui, 2007; Boxall and Gilbert, 2007; Gray, 2005). Investing in the acquisition and development of employees has become a necessity, if organizations wish to take an innovative position rather than a "wait and see" posture. Several researchers have recognized the importance of training and development by arguing that it is the most important human resource practice (Hooi and Ngui, 2014; Jennings *et al.*, 1995), it can contribute to economic growth (Hooi and Ngui, 2014), and it has



a strategic role to play in organizations where by acting as a catalyst for organizational transformation (Patton and Marlow, 2002; Longenecker and Fink, 2001; Drucker, 1999; Buckley and Kemp, 1989; McCall *et al.*, 1988). A consistent feature of recent human resource management studies is the relationship between strategic management development and organizational competitiveness; organizations and the people that operate them must break old habits and embrace new behaviours and processes that make them more effective and efficient (Inkson, 2008; Storey *et al.*, 1997; Thomson *et al.*, 1997; Cannon and Taylor, 1994; Handy, 1987).

In Palestine, a developing country characterized by political turmoil, high dependence on foreign aid, and lack of skills across most sectors of the economy, the need for training and development programmes is never overlooked. Widespread efforts by the Palestinian Authority to attract foreign investments and to develop the economy, coupled with the growing domestic competition, have further amplified the need for the strategic role that training and development is expected to perform. For instance, a study carried out by Al-Madhoun and Analoui (2003), pointed out that the Palestinian Authority and United Nations Relief and Works Agency agree that many Palestinian managers suffer from managerial ineffectiveness, and therefore, training and development is one of the long-term tools for promoting the development of the Palestinian economy and alleviating the problem of persistent unemployment in the Palestinian Territories. Against the backdrop of these multifaceted challenges, the present empirical study aims at exploring the nature and extent of management development and training within the telecommunication sector in Palestine. It sets out to empirically answer the following research question:

- RQ1.* How effective are the management training and development programmes that are conceived and implemented within the telecommunication sector in Palestine?

To achieve this objective, first the contemporary literature on training and development is reviewed in some detail. Then, the theoretical framework employed which guided the study and the methods utilized are presented, respectively. The results and findings of the research are discussed using comparative analysis to highlight their relevance, adequacy, and contextual significance in some detail. Finally, relevant conclusions are presented.

2. The challenges for management development: a literature review

The challenges encountered by managers can be very complex and double-binds (Chen *et al.*, 2007; Dopson and Neumann, 1998), as they endeavour to muddle through increased accountability and empowerment (McCarthy and Milner, 2013; Lenssen *et al.*, 2010; Winterton and Winterton, 1997), the need for innovativeness and efficiency, and the requirement to act locally and think globally. In the presence of these challenges, a company backed by an effective management training and development system has increasingly been seen as an essential ingredient for “programmatic change” (Mabey, 2004; Beer *et al.*, 1990). Management development contributes to the success of the organization by supporting the organization to grow the managers it needs to face its present and future needs (Basterritxea and Albizu, 2010; Armstrong, 2006); it enhances managers’ performance, offers them development opportunities, and provides for management succession. Dessler (2005, p. 285) defined management development as “any effort to advance current and future managerial performance by communicating

knowledge, altering attitudes, or increasing skills”; it thus involves but is not limited to, in-house training (e.g. courses, coaching, and rotational assignments), professional programmes (e.g. certified seminars), and university programmes (e.g. executive MBA programmes). For instance, a study by Mabey and Ramirez (2005) of human resource managers and line managers in 179 European companies, found a strong relationship between productivity and the company’s strategic orientation towards management development. Prior to this, a study by Clarke (1999) found that management development is essential in the process of culture change programmes that seek to implant new organizational attitudes and values.

Having said this, the link between competitive success and management development and training is not always readily seen by organizations, which in some cases the link is perceived as a profit reducing tool (Analoui and Samour, 2012; Mabey and Ramirez, 2005). A potential reason for this relates to the seldom and more “illusory than real” discussions of management development at the board level (Gitsham and Lenssen, 2009). A more recent study by Gitsham *et al.* (2012) argued that management development programmes are less and less influencing the organization’s ability to compete and succeed notwithstanding the significant expenditures on such programmes. On the other hand, studies by Sharma (2014), Punia and Saharan (2011), Coopers and Lybrand Associates (1992), concluded that organizations engaged in management development programmes have experienced several benefits including increased “turnover and gross margins”, “a more customer-oriented approach”, and “improved ability to respond to change”, respectively. Other studies showed how management development programmes can add directly to competitive advantage (Devins and Johnson, 2003; Downham *et al.*, 1992). Amid these concerns, McCarthy and Milner (2013), Basterritxea and Albizu (2010), Chen *et al.* (2007), and Lees (1992) argued that the concept of management development can be quite elusive, attracting multiple, and sometimes conflicting definitions; in some cases, this concept could convey different things to different people both in the literature and in organizations. Storey (1989a, b) suggested that conceptualizations about management development are closely wrapped up with what it is for, because, clearly, it is not an end in itself; therefore, conceptualizations have to be inferred from treatments of its objectives.

As the problems employees work on become more complex and intractable, the process of training and development becomes more chaotic and unmanageable (Tullar and Kaiser, 2000). Wang *et al.* (2009) made a distinction between traditional definitions that placed emphasis on formal, planned, and deliberate aspects of the management development process, and more contemporary definitions that saw management development as generic, including formal and informal processes. Furthermore, studies by Wang (2008), Yorks (2005), Torraco (2005), and Mumford (1993) emphasized the importance of viewing management development as an aggregate ongoing progression of informal and unplanned processes.

2.1 Contextualizing management development and training in Palestine

The introduction of the Palestinian Authority in 1993 – an interim body to administer Palestinian-populated areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip – had a great impact on the development of a flourishing private sector, establishing new organizations that opened new unprecedented business opportunities in Palestinian areas. This led to the creation of new job opportunities where, in certain areas, these opportunities exceeded the abilities and skills available in the local market. Analoui (2007) and Al-Madhoun *et al.* argued that training is capable of assuming a strategic role that contributes to the

development of national economies; they further supported their notion by arguing that for a policy to be successful in the long run it should be based on the development of the local workforce which can be relied on to maintain and sustain local organizations in the future (Analoui and Samour, 2012, 2013).

Although several initiatives were developed to improve the skills and capabilities of the Palestinian local workforce, two initiatives are worth exploring: the conference on development strategy in Palestine (MOPIC, 1997); and, the Palestinian Development Plan (2010-2013). Both initiatives have stressed the importance of training in local organizations, and the establishment of research and training centres for managerial and technical skills' development. The very recognition of human resource development as being essential to economic development and growth was thought to facilitate and expand the national economic base, increase the private sector's contribution to the development process, and to create new job opportunities. The results were felt through an increase in the number of productive organizations reaching 151,066 businesses employing 715,000 workers in year 2009 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Conversely, studies by Safi (1998) and Shaban (1998) pointed out that very few organizations in Palestine have clear training and development plans and in those where plans do exist, they were recently introduced. They claim that the reason for this is the high costs of training and development, and lack of confidence with the process and its outcomes. More recently, Analoui and Samour (2012), Analoui and Khoury (2010), Al-Madhoun and Analoui (2003), and Shath (1998) have also argued that deficiency in skills across many sectors of the Palestinian economy generated an enormous need for training and development programmes. At a regional level, training in Arab-speaking countries was characterized as generally low in terms of effectiveness (Al-Ali and Taylor, 1997; Analoui *et al.*, 2011), and lack of attention that translates into insufficient literature (Abu-Doleh, 1996; Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 1995).

3. Theoretical framework

The literature on training and development process seems to have a general consensus; there are at least three stages that any successful training programme development must go through. Balisi (2014), Analoui and Samour (2013), Noe (2008), Analoui (2007), Gibbs (2002), Quinones and Ehrenstein (1997), Taylor (1996), Harrison (1992), Cascio (1992) suggest the following three main stages: the assessment stage (identifying training needs and training objectives), the training and development stage (implementation), and the evaluation stage. There are, however, other models that consist of more than three stages. For example four-stage models were proposed by Martin and Jackson (1997), Attwood and Dimmock (1996), and Goldstein (1993); five-stage models by Armstrong (2006) and Dessler (2005). The main differences lie in the breakdown and details of each stage. Despite the presence of variations in existing models, the basic trichotomous model used in this research is believed to be a practical one for its ability to provide a systematic overview of the process, and assessment of management development process. In this section, a more detailed description of the three main stages is presented.

3.1 Assessment stage

Armstrong (2006) defines this stage as identifying the gap between the current situation and what ought to be; this is what has to be filled by training. Balisi (2014), Cascio (2014), Gibbs (2002) state that this stage is carried out at three different levels. First, the organization level which includes the identification of the organization

training needs by analysing the whole organization starting with short- and long-term goals (Gibbs, 2002; Goldstein, 1993). Second, at the task level, Balisi (2014) state that the content of the training programme will be determined based on analysis of the tasks or duties involved in the job (e.g. job analysis, performance appraisals, operating problems). The third is at the personal level focusing on recognizing the individual employees' needs for training. Armstrong (2006) emphasized that the difference between desired performance and actual performance is the individual's training needs. El Mouallem and Analoui (2014) in their discussion of capacity development have stressed the need for identification of gaps as an important stage for improving managerial capacity. In this respect, several methods are used to identify training and development needs, for example group discussions, assessment centres, advisory committees, interviews, performance reports, and surveys.

3.2 The implementation stage

The second stage includes developing and choosing the means and methods for achieving the needs and objectives identified in the first stage. Cummings and Worley (2014) argue that in creating a suitable training environment, the selection of the appropriate methods of instruction is important in order to enable the trainees to learn most effectively. Moreover, Ment (2011) identified four variables which determine the appropriate form of training to be selected: training objectives; skills and experience of trainees; training facilities and materials; and learning abilities of trainees. Armstrong (2006) suggested a list of tools used in training programmes, which can be used in isolation for each other or as complementary to each other. The methods are, but not limited to, lectures, conferences, programmed instructions, games, simulations, interactive videos, on-the-job training, demonstrations, action learning, and mentorship.

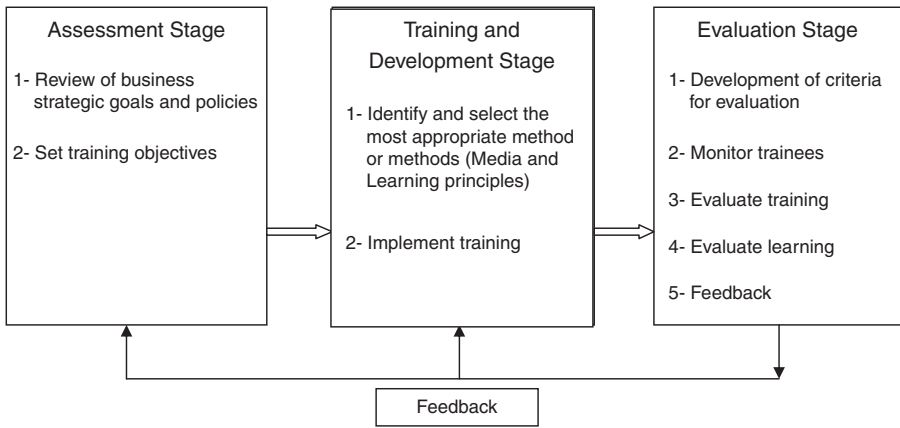
3.3 Evaluation stage

The third and final stage, in this systematic approach to training and development, is evaluation (Alvarez *et al.*, 2004). According to Ligabue (2009) and Phillips (1997), the purpose of evaluation falls into two main categories: to improve the training and development process and to decide whether to carry on with the programme or not. Kirkpatrick (1976) proposed a set of four criteria for evaluating training and development programmes: first, the "reaction" (like vs dislike) of participants towards the programme; second, skills and techniques gained- "learning"; third, the impact of training in modifying the participants' "behaviour"; and finally, tangible "results" in terms of reduced costs and improved quality. Hamblin (1974) introduced a similar model for evaluation, however emphasizing the non-quantifiable and quantifiable measurement of training "results": organization and ultimate value added, respectively. This was a key difference between Hamblin and Kirkpatrick models. A more recent framework for evaluation is a stakeholder-based evaluation as suggested by Michalski and Cousins (2001), which perceives evaluation as a cascading progression incorporating multiple views of stakeholders affected either directly or indirectly by the development process. Figure 1 illustrates the three main stages involved in the development of an effective training and development programme.

4. Methods

To answer the research question, in the summer of 2012 upon obtaining the approval from the CEO of Paltel Group (Palestinian Telecommunication Group) a survey was

Figure 1.
Generic training and
development
(trichotomous) model



Sources: Adapted from Analoui (2007), Garavan (2007), Doyle (2000), and Cascio (1992)

carried out by the researchers. The various statistical analysis and calculations were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and Windows Excel. The sampling method used in this study was purposefully a disproportionate stratified random sample of employees working within the telecommunication sector in Palestine.

Although limited studies were conducted to address the issues relating to management development and training in Palestine (Analoui and Samour, 2013; Al-Madhoun and Analoui, 2003; Safi, 1998; Shaban, 1998; Shath, 1998), none of these studies were concerned with employees working within the telecommunication sector. The telecommunication sector contribution to GDP was 6.1 per cent in 2011, and 6 per cent of job opportunities were present in this sector (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 2013). Several aspects of this vital sector, particularly management training and development, remain unexplored; this fact merits further investigation.

4.1 Sample

The sample population is a random disproportionate stratified sample drawn from a list provided by the human resource department at Paltel Communication Group. Right until the year of 2011 the telecommunication sector in Palestine was dominated primarily by Paltel Group. The group is a vertically integrated network operator, and a monopoly in almost all market segments. Paltel dominance is expressed in terms of high market share in all relevant market segments (most of them controlled as a monopoly), and being the only company able to operate in a wide range of segments (World Bank, 2008).

Disproportionate stratified random sampling was the most suitable alternative to use in this study due to the disproportionately large number of middle-level managers compared to top managers. This technique has ensured that sufficient numbers of managers from both strata are included in the sample. There is however instances where the different sizes of strata could result in inadequate data collected from the relatively small stratum (Sekaran and Bougie, 2009). In response to this and because there are fewer top-level managers, the researcher has decided to increase the sub-sample size of top-level managers by applying a 91 per cent as opposed to a 68 per cent of middle managers, thus giving a total of 142 managers (29 top-level and 113

middle-level). [Zikmund \(1997\)](#) stressed that the above mechanism is allowed only if the objective of the study is to bring forward some related characteristics of each stratum. The total number of completed and returned questionnaires were 110 out of 142 (11 top-level managers and 99 middle-level managers); a response rate of 77 per cent.

4.2 Survey instrument

The survey instrument was conducted in Paltel Group various sites. The questionnaire was divided into five main sections: the first section includes questions about the participant managers and the surveyed organizations; the second, third, and fourth sections focused on the process of training and development: needs assessment, implementation, and evaluation, respectively. The fifth section included questions on the current and future challenges facing training and development in the surveyed organizations. In total, there were 95 questions with many questions of a Likert scale nature. The questionnaire was pilot tested among a sample of 15 managers working within the telecommunication sector, and subsequently revised.

4.3 Data management

Prior to conducting the main analysis, two distinct stages of data management and preparation were performed.

4.3.1 Selection of questions. The questions selected in the final data set were developed in line with the three-stage model described in Section 3, and reaffirmed through a focus group and interviews with experts in the field of human resource development as well as academics at the Faculty of Business-Birzeit University. Irrelevant questions and those outside the scope of this study were omitted, e.g. questions on the extent of using human resource development software were perhaps relevant to other studies but not to this investigation of the current status of training and development within the Palestinian telecommunication sector. Accordingly, the total questions addressing the three stages were 52, all of which were found to be in relation to the specified model (see Figure 1) and at the same time in line with issues found in the literature ([Analoui and Khoury, 2010](#); Taylor, 1996; Cascio, 1992; Chruden and Sherman, 1984; Kirkpatrick, 1976; [Hamblin, 1974](#)). Subsequently, questions were assigned labels in order to facilitate the analysis.

4.3.2 Management of incomplete responses. The issue of incomplete responses was the second stage in the process of data management – a requirement of analysis is that all cells in the data set be complete. For the purpose of the analysis reported in this study, those questionnaires with more than six empty cells were deleted from the data set. Accordingly, this approach yielded the non-dismissal of any questionnaire and missing cells were replaced with response averages.

4.4 Validity and reliability

To ensure that this investigation is truly measuring what it set out to measure and to provide confirmation that the findings reflect an accurate assessment of the nature and extent of training and development in the surveyed organizations, information about validity, and reliability is important and needed.

In this study, validity has two dimensions. First, content validity was achieved by comparing between the measurements items of each question with an extensive review of the literature including examining previous studies; all measures used in this study were capable of capturing the extent and nature of training. Second, the measures used

in the study were tested for construct validity after having been nominated because of their close fit with the intended meaning of the generally accepted training and development stages.

As for the internal consistency of the measures used in this study, the reliability coefficient Cronbach α for all Likert scale questions were ranging between 0.67 and 0.88 (an internal consistency was performed separately for each question); the results demonstrated an acceptable level of reliability (Sekaran and Bougie, 2009; Hair *et al.*, 2006; Kaiser, 1974).

5. Results

The results presented in this section is divided into four parts, starting with a summary description of participant managers and their affiliate organizations, followed by a detailed presentation of the stages in relation to the process of management development and training in the surveyed organizations, namely needs assessment stage, training and development (implementation), and evaluation.

5.1 Profile: organizations and managers

In line with part 1 in the questionnaire, this section of the results deals with various aspects and characteristics of participant organizations and the managers operating them, both top and middle managers. The results show that returned questionnaires came from five companies which constitute the majority of players in the telecommunication sector in Palestine: Jawwal, mobile operator; Paltel, landline telephone operator; Hadara, internet provider, Reach, contact centre; Hulul, information technology services (see Table I). The majority of respondents are concentrated in two organizations, namely the landline

Managers/respondents' characteristics

Respondents according to type of organization (%)	
Mobile telephones (Jawwal)	43.6
Landline telephones (Paltel)	32.7
Internet provider (Hadara)	4.6
Information technology services (Hulul)	13.6
Contact centre (Reach)	5.5
Respondents' age (years)	31-40
Respondents' gender (%female)	19.1
Respondents' years of experience	6-10
Respondents' educational-level (%)	
Bachelor degree	73.6
Master	25.5
PhD	0.9
Respondents' job title (%)	
Top-level manager	11
Middle-level manager	99

Participant organizations' characteristics

Average number of employees	> 201 and above
Mean capital in Jordanian Dinars (JOD)	25 million JOD
Average years of operations	8-15
Average market performance	Above average

Table I.

Sample characteristics of managers and organizations involved in the study

Source: Data analysis

(Paltel) and mobile (Jawwal) companies with 32.7 and 43.6 per cent, respectively, which is primarily due to these two organizations being the largest in terms of size (manpower and capital) as well as the number of years in operation.

5.2 Needs assessment stage

According to the basic trichotomous model discussed earlier in Section 3, Table II shows the extent of various methods used by the surveyed organizations in assessing training and development needs. Performance appraisal (Mean = 1.85) is the most used method in determining the needs for training and development. This is followed by a special committee with a Mean of 2.30.

Table III shows a summary of the managers' level of agreement with the factors being considered during the assessment stage. Using a Likert scale of 12 factors (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.740$), the factors are further grouped into three main categories: internal factors, external factors, and individual-specific factors. For the most part, the results show that all the three category-specific factors are taken into consideration in the process of assessing training and development needs; however, more emphasis is given to both internal and external factors.

5.3 Training and development stage (implementation)

Table IV provides a summary of the most prevalent methods of training in the surveyed organizations as well as the extent of their application. By far, Table IV shows that the most widely used method of training delivery is the lecture style (Mean = 1.68), followed by the seminar or conference style (Mean = 1.85). These results, to some degree, are consistent with the managers' response concerning the off-the-job training as being the most preferred approach to training and development in the surveyed organizations.

5.4 Evaluation

Results pertaining to the evaluation function are presented in Table V. The results show the managers' responses with regards to the frequency of different methods used in evaluating training and development programmes. The questionnaire method is the

Methods used	Level of emphasis on each method				Mean	Median
	Yes	Often	Sometimes	Never		
Face-to-face interviews	12 (11%)	17 (16%)	51 (46%)	30 (27%)	2.90	3.00
Questionnaires	12 (11%)	16 (14%)	28 (26%)	54 (49%)	3.13	3.00
Observation	16 (15%)	45 (41%)	42 (38%)	6 (6%)	2.35	2.00
Performance appraisal	41 (37%)	51 (46%)	12 (11%)	6 (6%)	1.85	2.00
A special committee	39 (36%)	21 (20%)	23 (22%)	24 (22%)	2.30	2.00
Ad hoc	8 (7%)	18 (17%)	23 (21%)	59 (55%)	3.23	4.00

Source: Data analysis

Table II.
Methods employed
in identifying
managers' training
and development
needs

Table III.
Managers' perception of training and development needs

Factors	Managers' perception				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>Internal factors</i>					
Future organizational aspirations are incorporated (e.g. long-term goals)	19 (17%)	53 (49%)	34 (31%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)
Strategies that your organization is pursuing form an integral part in the assessment stage	9 (8%)	63 (57%)	32 (29%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)
Assessment is task and/or job oriented	26 (23%)	79 (72%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
During the assessment phase, only organizational interests are considered	4 (3%)	45 (41%)	32 (29%)	27 (25%)	2 (2%)
Internal weaknesses are addressed during this stage	31 (28%)	55 (50%)	21 (19%)	3 (3%)	–
<i>External factors</i>					
External challenges are considered	18 (16%)	75 (68%)	15 (14%)	–	2 (2%)
Government regulations and policies related to management development and training	3 (3%)	35 (32%)	39 (36%)	27 (25%)	5 (4%)
The role of competition	21 (20%)	69 (64%)	12 (11%)	5 (5%)	–
Cultural factors (e.g. if the training is to be administered by a foreign expert)	11 (10%)	38 (35%)	53 (48%)	6 (5%)	2 (2%)
Market needs and wants are considered during this stage	16 (15%)	82 (74%)	10 (9%)	2 (2%)	–
<i>Individual-specific factors</i>					
Individual needs are taken into consideration	15 (14%)	47 (43%)	36 (33%)	9 (8%)	2 (2%)
During the assessment phase, both individual and organizational interests are considered	2 (2%)	31 (28%)	54 (49%)	20 (18%)	3 (3%)

Source: Data analysis**Table IV.**
Methods of delivery

Methods of delivery	Managers' responses						Mean	Median
	Yes		Sometimes		No			
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)		
Lecture	39	37	61	58	5	5	1.68	2.00
A conference or seminar	26	26	64	63	11	11	1.85	2.00
Role play	22	22	37	37	41	41	2.19	2.00
Case studies	27	28	41	42	30	31	2.03	2.00
Group or individual projects	12	12	57	57	30	30	2.18	2.00
Virtual courses (online)	6	6	35	36	55	57	2.51	3.00

Note: Freq., frequency
Source: Data analysis

most frequently used method with a mean of 1.46 followed by observing the trainees' performance before and after the provision of training with a mean of 1.91. Among the least frequently used methods is to test the trainee learning experience using formal and standardized testing tools.

Table V.
Methods of
evaluation

Methods of evaluation	Managers' responses							
	Yes		Sometimes		No		Mean	Median
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)		
Trainees filling out a questionnaire	74	68	18	17	16	15	1.46	1.00
Trainee performance before and after the training	29	27	59	55	19	18	1.91	2.00
Interviewing the trainees	13	13	56	54	34	33	2.20	2.00
Ask the supervisors for their opinions	15	14	61	58	30	28	2.14	2.00
Testing the trainees' level of learning	17	17	43	42	42	41	2.25	2.00
Assessing impact on employee performance	12	12	64	67	20	21	2.08	2.00

Note: Freq., frequency**Source:** Data Analysis

6. Discussion and implications

According to the data analysis, a large number of returned questionnaires came from the Mobile Telephone Company and the Landline Telephone Company. The results show that the surveyed organizations enjoy an above average market performance, which corroborate national market indicators (World Bank, 2008). However, this situation is attributed mainly to two reasons: first, these organizations being the first movers into the Palestinian market, provided them with a competitive edge over competitors (Analoui and Khoury, 2010; Analoui, 2007); second, in an effort to encourage investment, the Palestinian Authority offered these organizations exclusivity of being the sole operators of such services for a number of years (e.g. Jawwal the mobile telecommunication company had an exclusivity contract for ten years that started in 1995). When asked about the presence of human resources department, most respondents (77 per cent) indicated the existence of an HR department in their affiliate organizations with development and training amongst its major roles. It should be noted however, that these results, of course, say little about the quality and effectiveness of training and development programmes (Analoui *et al.*, 2011).

The issue of top-management commitment has been at the receiving end for a lot of praise (Longenecker and Fink, 2001; Thomson *et al.*, 1997; Storey *et al.*, 1997; Jennings *et al.*, 1995; Cannon and Taylor, 1994; Harrison, 1992; Buckley and Kemp, 1989). An 80 per cent of participant managers said that a written plan for training and development is regularly formulated; however, it is of medium-term range and is ineffectively communicated to various levels. This finding is also supported with 77 per cent of respondents who confirmed that the communication process is not pervasive, thereby limiting the transfer of all aspects of the plans, as well as restricting the contribution towards the development of such plans to a limited group of employees. To this end, Armstrong (2006) argues that for training and development plans to be effective they should be able to instil a sense of ownership in virtually all employees; not only employees should contribute to the formulation of such plans, but they also need to be kept abreast with the progress and development of such plans. As for the policies in relation to training, despite their existence, they are not frequently revised and modified deeming some to be obsolete and incapable of reflecting the changes taking place inside the organizations as well as their business environment (Analoui, 2007). Furthermore, the findings emphasize the argument that large size organization have more structured and formal management development (Gray, 2005); respondents from

both the landline and mobile companies stated very positively that they do have formal management development policies.

Overall, the results in this section offer a useful insight: to some degree, surveyed organizations are taking an active role in their efforts to train and develop their managers. This much is encouraging: it seems that training and development, not only taking place in these organizations but appears to be taking a central and strategic role. An inference: “more than in the past”, Mabey’s (2004, p. 505) short answer to the question of how training and development in assuming a more central role could lead to improved and expanded training and development function. However, the link between longer term strategy and management development remains weak. This is in line with studies conducted for Palestinian managers (El Mouallem and Analoui, 2014; [Analoui and Khoury, 2010](#)), which found that competency development is undertaken mainly to achieve short-term gains ([Analoui and Samour, 2012](#)). A final thought relates to the relatively high employee turnover rates indicating that formal management policies seem to co-exist with poor human resource practices and potentially disrupted organizational learning.

The findings have various implications for human resource practice. In particular, for management development to have a positive impact, a human resource expert who understands the potential and limitations of management development needs to be present at a policy-making level ([Analoui and Samour, 2012](#)), and who is capable of drawing out the connections between strategic intent and managerial capacity over the longer term.

6.1 Management development and training process: assessment stage

Although the results, in Tables II and III, show that a need assessment for management development is systematically conducted, the results indicate that performance appraisal followed by a special committee are the most used methods in identifying training needs. These findings confirm two issues: first, a backward looking exists in the needs identification stage, which insufficiently considers individual and organizational future aspirations; second, is the limited degree of involvement by the managers themselves which inhibit their individual goals to be included at this stage, hence giving more weight to organizational goals over individual goals ([Analoui, 2007](#); [Armstrong, 2006](#)). This is in line with the majority of responses received from managers about their contribution to the formulation of management development plans; their contribution is limited. They also indicated that there is over reliance on the human resource department in their respective organizations for the development of such plans ([Analoui and Bao, 2010](#)). These results confirm the following: first, a deficiency in the process that inhibits the inclusion of various views of different stakeholders; second, ineffectiveness in addressing the real needs of both the managers and organizations involved the process of development. In this regard, the literature is very clear and encourages a participatory approach which allows multiple stakeholders’ views to be incorporated in the needs assessment stage ([Hooi and Ngui, 2014](#); [Inkson, 2008](#); [Chen et al., 2007](#); [Gray, 2005](#); [Doyle, 2000](#); [Mole, 1996](#); [Mumford, 1993](#)).

The implications of these results for management development can be damaging, thus altering its real meaning and effect. The lack of a holistic view (a multidimensional system) in identifying the needs of training and development may result in myopic needs assessment stage that will have outward repercussions on both post-training evaluation as well as the identification of non-training areas that influence performance. When formulating the plans for management development, the goal is to create a sense of

ownership at different organizational levels and also to develop a sense of continuity in the way management talent is cultivated, which survives the coming and going of key individuals.

6.2 *Management development and training process: development and training stage*

The results show that on average managers are receiving more than five days of training each year. This, however, is not indicative of the quality of such programmes. As for the drivers of development and training, managers' responses were not definite whether such activities are part of a strategic response to external pressures and business priorities. One example to reinforce this is exhibited by a fairly low usage of organizationally derived skills and/or competence frameworks.

So how do these organizations go about developing their managers? All surveyed organizations showed no differences in the priority given to training and development, except for Jawwal and Paltel showing a higher priority, which is due to mainly size and number of years in operations. Formal training is the most preferred type of management development used in all organizations, while class-room learning and technical training are considered the most effective methods for the development of managers. Although not unexpected, these results indicate the importance of organizations investing in their managerial workforce, yet at the same time the results reinforce the view held by Doyle (2000) that training and development in most organizations have a tendency to rely on typical over-simplified solutions rather than solutions that address the real challenges (Analoui *et al.*, 2010; Analoui and Al-Madhoun, 2003). The conventional view of training and development has been to see it as including formal and informal activities, on-the-job and off-the-job, which lead to improved skills at an individual level and enhanced capability at an organizational level (Mabey, 2004). Larsen (2004) reverses this view by emphasizing less on management positions and more on managerial processes; less on organizations as initiators of training and more on organizations as productive arenas for learning; less on training and action and more on learning and reflection.

The implications of this are that organizations facing intense competition and considering expanding their operations into new markets will find an increasingly proactive stance to developing and training managers. Mabey (2004) stresses that there is no alternative for internally driven development that improves the manner in which decision-making processes and strategies are formulated and implemented. Nevertheless, preferences for certain methods of development vary from one country to another, and from one organization to another; some consideration of these differences should be taken into account (Larsen, 2004). Most learning for managers is entrenched in various organizational systems and applied in the context of specific cultures, routines, and shared norms that define individual organizations (Analoui *et al.*, 2011).

6.3 *Management development and training process: evaluation stage*

The process of training evaluation according to the literature proves to be a viable tool for optimizing training quality for managers and organizations. The results of the study show that evaluation of training programmes in the surveyed organizations is lacking with high emphasis on very limited and traditional methods (e.g. questionnaires are the most used method and they are used in isolation from other methods). Furthermore, it is equally clear that all surveyed organizations do not monitor systematically their overall competency and management needs, thus further restraining the already fragmented evaluation process ability to produce the expected outcomes.

Larsen (2004) argues that evaluation leads employees towards self-learning and enables trainees to improve mutual relationship with training management and trainers. The literature identifies three ways to make training evaluation a more objective process, through interviewing trainees, trainers, and training management at feasible stages of training either pre-post or mid training. The results of the study in connection with the review of literature suggest that there is a real need for a clear cut training evaluation strategy configured with organizational environment to change mind set of training stakeholders and instil quest for real knowledge, skill, and aptitude.

7. Conclusion

This study focused on exploring and identifying the current condition of training in Palestinian telecommunication organizations. In the process, the study utilized a generic and basic three-stage model for its systematic ability to highlight pitfalls. The literature acknowledges that, it has been established that investment in training and development can make a difference to self-perception measures of managers. Moreover, it is not the presence of best practices or even the amount of training conducted that is essential but the ethos governing the development of managerial capability sustained over time. The idea seems to be that training and development efforts are worthwhile and that there are no off-the-shelf quick fixes. The organizations under study should not underestimate the challenge of creating and delivering a consistent, longer term, and strategic approach to best fit training and development. The findings of the present study in Palestine have important implications for policy makers, HR professionals, and for organization-level managers. For policy makers, the results of well-coordinated efforts between the government and organizations can be very positive in terms of creating a development infrastructure and the development of training programmes relevant to organizations and managers. For managers, it stresses several benefits, most importantly is individual flexibility and continual learning.

The findings associated with the process of management training and development laid the basis for future research. First, there are many reasons why the gap between expected and actual training and development remains distinct in most organizations and much important development occurs outside the formal programmes and planned activities. This constitutes a fertile area of research to be mind. Second, the effectiveness of training and development is not only a function of organization-level commitment. Management training and development must be viewed within the broader context of organizations affecting labour markets. The connections between organizational activities and country-specific factors require further analysis. Further research in this direction would help provide decision makers with the needed knowledge that complement organizational practices. Third, additional insights can be developed by comparing cross-country systems of training and development. Future empirical research in this area would reveal some important organizational variables that can be further used in cross-country studies.

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